

Senator Richard Lugar
United States Senate
306 Hart Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: FY 2011 LWCF Appropriation for the Hoosier National Forest

Dear Senator Lugar:


The Nature Conservancy requests your support for the Hoosier National Forest - Unique Areas, Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) project in the Fiscal Year 2011 Interior Appropriations Budget Bill. With an appropriation of \$1,200,000, this project will protect some of the state's most unique, irreplaceable natural areas for the enjoyment of our children and grandchildren.

The 520-acre project includes three tracts of land, two in Orange County and one in Perry County. The Wesley Chapel Gulf/Lost River cave system (Blanton and Kimball properties) in Orange County is ranked as one of the top ten caves for species diversity in the nation. Clover Lick Barrens (Edwards property) in Perry County is a Limestone Barren, which is considered an imperiled community type. The site has been designated as a "USFS Special Area" because of the rare plant communities that it supports. Additionally, both properties have known populations of the federally-endangered Indiana bat found in or near the sites.

Outdoor recreation is a part of our way of life. Nearly 50% of Indiana's citizens participate in hunting, fishing or wildlife watching (this is ten percent higher than the national average). However, only four percent of our state's public land is set aside for conservation and recreation purposes. Protection of the Wesley Chapel Gulf properties will allow for public access to additional land for hiking at the Wesley Chapel Gulf and more stopping points for the on-going tours of the Lost River. Protection of the Edwards property will increase the opportunities for hunting, fishing and water-based recreation along Oil Creek.

We appreciate your commitment to protecting Indiana's forests and enhancing the quality of life for Indiana's citizens. Thank you for your consideration of this important project.

Sincerely,


Mary McConnell
State Director

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